

Tale Feathers

April
2008

Volume 75
Number 3

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Message

April & May
Bird walk and trip
info

Education &
Conservation
Updates

....and MORE!!

Be sure to visit our
website to
get any new info
after publication.

Talefeathers Newsletter going Electronic **FOURTH NOTICE**

The St. Louis Audubon Society has decided to join many other organizations and move to electronic newsletters. This move will take place in mid-2008 at which time we will discontinue the full distribution of the printed

Talefeathers as you have known it. We are doing this to save cost, the volunteer time involved in putting out the paper version and the uncertainty of the scheduling of the printing company and postal services. This should avoid the problem that we have had of newsletters arriving at your homes after an announced event has already been held. In addition, the electronic form will give us the flexibility to send out occasional short newsletters when items of special interest come up. From an environmental standpoint this switch will also save the paper on which 2500+ newsletters are printed.

In order for you to receive your electronic newsletter we will need your e-mail address. As soon as possible send your e-mail address to Sue Gustafson at smgustafson@juno.com. **Please include your regular mailing address and zip code for cross checking purposes.** Sue will compile the addresses into an updateable data base.

We will mail a limited number of paper newsletters to any of our members who do not have e-mail access. This may be a much simplified version of our current *Talefeathers*. If you do not have an e-mail address and still wish to receive the newsletter you must mail a note to our post office box P.O. Box 220227, St. Louis, MO 63122.

Failure to send either your e-mail address or a specific request for continuation of a paper newsletter will result in your not receiving any newsletter. However, we will mail out the annual calendar to all of our members in August of each year. Included will be instructions for putting your e-mail address into the data base and/or requesting the paper version of *Talefeathers*.

St. Louis Audubon Society

Opportunities

and

Announcements

Mission Statement of

The St. Louis
Audubon Society

Create a
community
connection to nature
through
Education &
Conservation

Goals

To foster an
awareness and
understanding
of birds and other
wildlife and their
habitats

To educate our
community so people
can make
informed decisions
about the natural
world.

Take a Walk in the Woods

May 17, Saturday - 8:00 to 11:00, Rockwoods Reservation

Aaron and Angie Jungbluth, St. Louis Audubon members and volunteer naturalists for the Missouri Department of Conservation will be leading a special hike.

It's a great day to birdwatch! Come and celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Rockwoods Reservation by birding one of National Audubon Society's designated Important Bird Areas. Join us on a 3.2 mile hike along the Lime Kiln Loop Trail while looking for migrant and resident birds in the mixed-hardwood forest.

We will also visit some of Rockwoods other unique bird habitats, like the prairie and shortleaf pine forest.

Forest Park Forever Bird Walk News!

St. Louis Audubon Society Board Members, Lynne Breakstone and Jim Wilson, will continue to lead beginning bird walks on the first Saturday of every month. Walks will be outdoors; we will meet in front of the Education and Visitor Center (5595 Grand Dr.) at 8:30 a.m., and we will bird for approximately 2 hours.

Kindly RSVP to Anne Grossman at (314) 367-7275, ext. 14 or email to

agrossmann@forestparkforever.org.

Dates: April 5, May 3, and June 7

All ages and birding levels welcome.

Forest Park Forever, in collaboration with SLAS, has just put up 9 bluebird houses (with a 10th is soon to come) in various sites throughout the park. Board members Lynne Breakstone and Ann Early will participate in weekly monitoring of the boxes to keep track of whatever activity they bring about. Of course the hope is to establish a healthy bluebird colony in Forest Park; however other birds like the boxes also: wrens, chickadees and tree swallows. (We will certainly be happy to provide them rent-free housing also!) In order to avoid disturbing any birds, we ask that you keep your distance from the boxes this first year until we see what happens.

Woodcock and Owl Prowl

Trip Report

John Solodar

Saturday afternoon, March 8, almost 40 people gathered at 5:00 pm at the Hampton Lake parking lot at Busch Conservation Area for the annual Woodcock and Owl Prowl birding trip. They were not to be disappointed. Early arrivals got to see a first of the year Eastern Phoebe before the trip even started.

Soon a Barred Owl was heard calling nearby. A little after five o'clock, one of the trip leaders, Josh Uffman, gave his best Barred Owl imitation call.

Much to our delight someone saw the bird respond by flying in trees across the road from the parking area. Soon everyone was on it with good spotting scope views as well. For a few people this was the first owl that they had ever seen. Go to the following link to see a picture of this owl that Josh obtained: <http://www.pbase.com/image/93931707>.

One the way to the Woodcock grounds past lake 36 the group came upon another Barred Owl that had been located two days earlier in a scouting trip by some of the leaders. At the Woodcock grounds we waited until the sun had fully set and then some as one couple found an Eastern Towhee and we all saw a number of ducks in flight. Soon many of us heard the usual "peeent" noise that male woodcocks make.

After making this noise they rise in a courtship flight that entails a few spiraling circles after which they return to their starting point to take up the ritual again. All of this occurs in generally open areas where visibility is fairly good. As a result we were all treated to the courtship flights of 8-10 American Woodcock over about 30 minutes. This was an excellent result for a night with temperatures in the low 30s. For the leaders, it is always fun to get someone a life bird.

April & May Birding Trips

Pat Lueders

April 12, Saturday, 8:00 am—B. K. Leach

Conservation Area

John Solodar will be leading this trip to one of the most exciting areas that we bird. This conservation area is improving every year and may eventually be one of the best areas in the state. We should see a large variety of migrating birds, ducks, and shorebirds. Meeting directions will be available on the website or in the trip notice on MOBIRDS.

April 19, Saturday, 7:30 am—Shaw Nature Preserve

Connie Alwood, one of the authors of *Birding in St. Louis*, will lead us through this beautiful area. The wide variety of habitats will enable us to see a large variety of migrating birds. There will be hiking throughout the preserve, so wear comfortable shoes and be dressed for cool mornings. Meet Connie at the headquarters, I-44 to the Gray Summit exit, then left ¼ mile to the entrance. There is a small fee if you aren't a member of the Botanical Garden.

May is a very busy month: peak migration of birds and number of bird walks planned. Please check our website for updates. Here is a synopsis of early May:

May 3, Saturday, 7:30 a.m.—Columbia Bottom.

The trip leader is Bill Rowe.

May 7, Wednesday, 7:30 a.m.—Tower Grove Park

The trip leader is John Solodar.

May 10, Saturday, 7:30 a.m.—Tower Grove Park

The trip leader is Bob Bailey

May 17, Saturday, 7:30 a.m.—Columbia Bottom

The trip lead is Mike Arduser.

There are more trips planned for later May. That info will be available in the next *Tale Feathers*.

www.stlouisaudubon.org



Confluence Birding Festival

**** Rain or Shine! ****

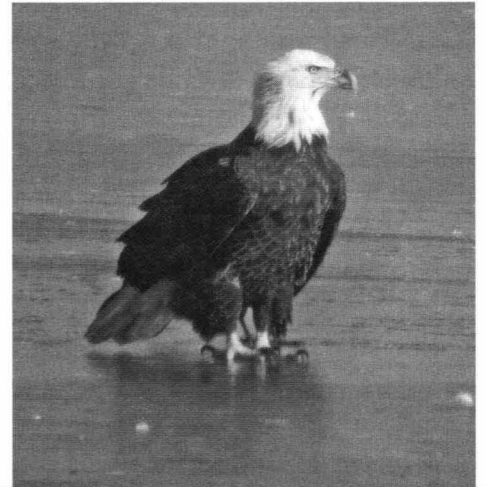
3rd Annual
Wings of Spring
Confluence Birding Festival

Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary
30 minutes north of the Arch on the
Mississippi River near Alton, Illinois

Saturday, April 26m 2008

Visit www.wingsofspring.org

For list of activities and performers, story-tellers
Vendors, and to register for bird walks.



Photos
courtesy
Mike
Grant:
Bald Eagle
Horned Lark
White Pelicans

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Torrey Berger

CHANGES, CHANGES, MAYBE NOT TOO MUCH

It seems that the last few years at SLAS have been the years for change. We adopted a new Strategic Plan; we are in the process of converting the newsletter to email; we are starting a search for an Executive Director (paid staff).

Yet with all these changes, have we changed that much? Our new Mission Statement is consistent with the old and our emphasis toward that goal, our "specialty", remains educating people about birds and nature, and through such education, creating and fostering a conservation ethic in our community. It seems to me that rather than making basic changes, we are taking steps which will allow us to achieve the "same old, same old," but to do it more efficiently and more effectively. Let me mention just a couple of examples.

Our field trip programs had been averaging 10 to 15 participants for many years. In the last two years we have put more emphasis on "beginners", have added mid-week trips and have sought new destinations. Field trips now are having turn-outs in the 30 to 40 plus range with many more new faces.

The ultimate goal of our mission and all our hard work is on-the-ground conservation for birds and other wildlife. Over the last few years SLAS has spent and committed to spend well leveraged dollars for conservation projects at an accelerated level. We are sending in excess of \$3,500.00 to Honduras to assist in habitat maintenance for Missouri breeding birds who spend the winter at the Pico Bonito National Park. We have committed \$10,000 as our share of an \$80,000 project at Riverlands for a water control system to provide habitat for migrating shore birds, and we provided \$2,500 dollars for tree replacement at Tower Grove Park in the wake of the deviation caused by ice storms. We were able to do all of this, and more, without in any way stressing our financial situation by asking for and receiving additional support from our membership, another activity which is new for SLAS.

Change can be uncomfortable sometimes, but in the case of SLAS, I am comfortable that the changes now underway will position SLAS to greatly expand its effectiveness on behalf of nature and nature-lovers.

PREVIEW!!
MAY GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND PRESENTATION
MAY 20, 2008
POWDER VALLEY NATURE CENTER
VICKI FLIER AND THE SLAS EDUCATION TEAM
ON
JOHN JAMES AUDUBON
(DETAILS IN MAY TALE FEATHERS)

Education Team Report

To date the Education Team has been in over 30 schools talking to over 1,200 children on a variety of subjects.

In October our most popular program was Bats but spring will bring Birds into the classroom. We have headed up three workshops at Meramec-St. Louis Community College, two feed store birding events, four Feeder Watch Classes and four library talks. Another project we have done is Missouri Conservation Department's "**Wetland for Kids**" out at Busch Wildlife Conservation Area on **April 5th**.

Earthday at the Missouri Botanical gardens will be celebrated **April 19** from 10:00 am until 3:00pm. If you want to help at the table call for schedule of work hours. We will be talking about birds, birding and the environment for the birds. It is always fun and entertaining to say the least.

May 8th will be our biggest project yet, as we will be working with the Lindbergh School District on a district wide program on birdsongs in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. We will need a lot of volunteers for the three hours we have the kids. No experience is necessary for the job except a love of birds. Anyone able to help, please call me to sign up.

Vicki Flier @314-968-9166.



WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY BEAK?

Rare female cross-bill seen in Jefferson county in early March. Photo by Dave Pierce.

Conservation Report

Karen Meyer

"All I Need is the Air that I Breathe"... Clean air, that is, and surely clean water and healthy food. Might be cause for "singing"... or even "signing" to help secure what's important. Below you'll find some things to celebrate and some avenues to solutions.

For future air quality improvements, **watch for volunteers in your area and sign the petition in support of the Missouri Renewable Energy initiative.**

This will require Missouri utilities to provide 15% of their energy from renewable sources by 2021. The collection of 150,000 signatures by the end of April will put the Renewable Energy Standards on the Missouri ballot in the November election. Many other states already have mandatory renewable energy requirements for utilities. **Want to help gather signatures? Sign up at www.renewmo.org** and you'll be put in touch with another volunteer in your area.

On March 3, 2008 the **Associated Electric Cooperative** abandoned plans to build the **Norborne Missouri Coal Plant**. They will pursue renewable energy and efficiency measures, keeping tons of pollutants out of our air. Read more and **thank the AECI by visiting www.mocleanenergy.org**

As a consumer of food and household products, not sure if you are getting a Green snow job? You can get evaluations of green labels at www.greenerchoices.org, and click on Eco-labels center. **And if you think it's important to know our foods' origin, ask congress to support COOL, Country of Origin Labeling.** Tell your representative that you want no more delays on this issue.

A very good source of information on local water and air quality concerns is The **Missouri Coalition for the Environment**, www.moenviron.org. And if you haven't signed up already, visit our **National Audubon Society** site www.audubon.org, **Issues and Action**.

Thanks for all that you do as St. Louis Audubon members and concerned citizens to help improve our environment.

B.K.Leach Rail Survey - New Dates for 2008

John Solodar

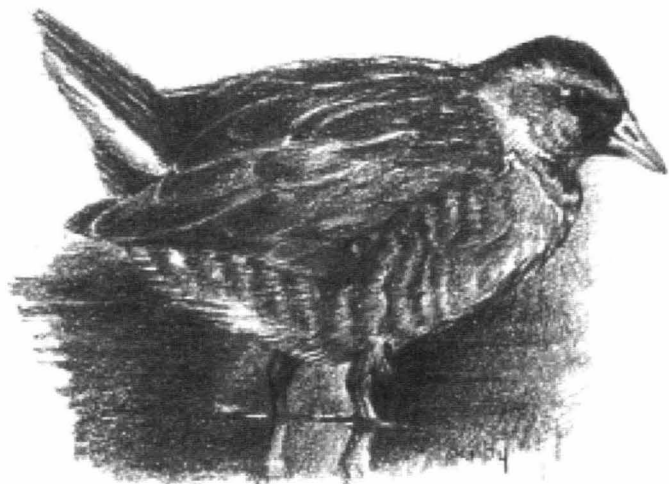
Many of you have participated in the B.K.Leach Rail Survey the last three years. With your help we have provided valuable data to establishing the presence of breeding Rails in the Bittern Basin and King's Lake areas of B.K.Leach. Because the area was so dry last year, Brian Loges, the manager of B.K.Leach for MDC, has announced new dates for this year's survey which will allow us to perform the survey during wetter times. This will also include one migratory date with the potential for a much greater variety of species.

The dates are all Saturdays: April 26, May 31 and June 14. . Please reserve as many of these evenings as you can to help with this valuable work. The surveys are conducted in the evening from about 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm. We'll start the April date at 4:30 p.m., we'll take 45 minutes or so to review last year's results and run through a refresher on data collection and the bird calls. Brian would like to have everyone at the first observation point by 6:15. We can do water, chips, and deli sandwiches again for the first date. For the later dates we can meet at 6:15. We'll always meet at the area headquarters. Same as last year, we'll have to cancel in the event of rain or high winds.

Please contact Brian or John Solodar to sign up to participate and/or if you have any questions or comments. Participants will be sent electronic versions of the calls by e-mail so that they can practice ahead of time.

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Tale Feathers

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St. Louis Audubon Society 2007 - 2008

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**HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR
EMAIL ADDRESS YET?
ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY
IS GOING
ELECTRONIC!!!!**

**SEE DETAILS INSIDE
THIS ISSUE OF *TALE FEATHERS*
*Time is running out.....***